

2023 FORT MCCOY YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY TO JUNE



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FRIDAY, JANUARY 12, 2024

Fort McCoy 2023 Year in Review: First half of year included historic events, continued construction, winter training

Going into 2023, Fort McCoy had a lot going on. The installation had numerous construction projects and planned construction going on, lots of training was planned, and historic things were happening.

And as the first half of the year went on, the Fort McCoy team and workforce stepped up to get many, many things accomplished successfully. No matter what challenge arose, through every month, the installation team stood strong to get the mission done.

JANUARY

— Fort McCoy's Directorate of Human Resources workforce development team kicked off 2023 with a whole new approach to welcoming new employees to the installation. The new phased onboarding process held its first session Jan. 3 at the Directorate of Human Resources (DHR) conference room.

"This is something new we're doing to enhance our onboarding process for new team members," said Workforce Development Specialist Jamie Gular with Fort McCoy DHR.

Gular said Fort McCoy DHR has been working on improving their new team member onboarding process over the past year based on feedback the directorate has received from new team members in the garrison workforce and leaders.

"Onboarding is more than just in-processing, completing administrative requirements, and mandatory training," Gular said.

And through the feedback and through a lot of hard work by the DHR team as well as the Workforce Development Working Group, a new onboarding program was built in a phased approach.

"Phase one is pre-arrival and sponsorship," Gular said. "Phase two is arrival and welcome. The goal of this phase is to personalize the welcome of new team members to the Fort McCoy team. Successfully welcoming and onboarding a new team member requires planning, careful thought, and effort — especially from leaders. However, it is effort worth spending."

— The construction of a future transient training brigade headquarters in the 1600 block on the cantonment area also was in full steam as 2023 began. By Jan. 5, 2023, framework for the building started taking shape and it started looking like a building.

A news update prior to Jan. 5 stated that contractor L.S. Black Constructors had one wall built on the new building, and workers continued work all around the grounds. Additionally, steel for framework had started to arrive and more and more infrastructure work from late December into early January was visible throughout the project.

— One by one, firefighters donned their dry suits and diving equipment and slipped below the ice of Big Sandy Lake on South Post on Jan. 11 to practice rescuing a victim during ice rescue training for the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department dive team.

Members of fire department's dive team spent most of the day at the lake practicing various scenarios and honing their ice diving skills as part of an annual requirement to not only refresh skills but also maintain certifications, said Assistant Fire Chief Hunter Young. He said it's especially important for each member of the dive team to maintain their readiness, especially if the team is called for a real-world response.

Young explained the main scenario they practiced for each diver.

"We were doing (a scenario) that has a fisherman who has fallen through the ice," Young said. "The first team we have that goes out is going to rescue the fisherman through a surface rescue, and then the fisherman is relays back that his partner has went under water. From there we activate a dive team. The dive team then gets ready, goes in, and finds the second victim."

Young also explained why it's important to practice and maintain these skills every year.

"It's a very technical skill," Young said. "It can be claustrophobic under the ice, so they're learning to be comfortable down there. They can have very low visibility under the ice once the mud gets stirred up, so it's a great thing to get out here and practice and make sure you're comfortable when the time comes to have to do your job."

Firefighter Brandon Perron was one of the divers who practiced the scenario Jan. 11 at the lake. He said the training was a great experience, and that being part of the dive team has special importance to the area around Fort McCoy.

"It's a big importance in our area in particular in that we don't have (any other) really defined dive teams in our area," Perron said. "Our department having this capability allows us to go anywhere in the Monroe County area to go and help the local communities that don't have this capability and to be able to be there as quickly as possible to get under the water to help people."

— Fort McCoy Land Rehabilitation and Maintenance (LRAM) crew member Kris Steinhoff with the Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security was busy operating an excavator with a special attachment in early January to improve safety along a roadway on the installation's South Post.

For this work, Jim Raiten, LRAM coordinator with Fort McCoy DPTMS, said Steinhoff was doing some roadside vegetation clearing in a cooperative effort with Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW).

"Fort McCoy DPW identified some roadsides that have vegetation encroachment, such as over-



Photos by Scott T. Sturkol

An Airman with an Air National Guard security forces unit takes the plunge for cold-water immersion Jan. 27, 2023, as part of a 16-day Cold-Weather Operations Course led by the Air Force at Fort McCoy. More than 50 Airmen were participating in the training from across the Air Force.

hanging limbs and smaller trees growing in the right of way throughout the installation," Raiten said. "So, this work was being done to help maintain the travel routes, so they are safe and lessen maintenance of the roadway."

— Fort McCoy held its 2023 observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day on Jan. 19 at McCoy's Community Center, and guest speaker Marcus Gentry took the opportunity during that observance to challenge all in attendance to remember the principles Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. lived by.

Gentry's presentation looked at many things representing the memory, history, and meaning of the life of Martin Luther King Jr. Gentry discussed the principles King lived by during his presentation.

"The first principle that he lived by is the principle of compassion — compassion for someone in something beyond himself," Gentry said. "One of his quotes that he used to speak about this principle was true compassion. True compassion is more than just flinging a coin at a beggar. It demands on our humanity that if we live in a society that produces beggars, we are morally commanded to restructure society. That's what he said about compassion. That's one principle."

— Fifty Airmen with multiple Air National Guard security forces units completed a 16-day Cold-Weather Operations Course in mid-January at Fort McCoy in a training effort led by Air Force security forces instructors.

Chief Master Sgt. Anthony Harvey, security forces manager with the 164th Mission Support Group, 164th Airlift Wing, at Memphis Air National Guard Base, Tenn., helped get the training organized. Harvey had previously trained in Fort McCoy's version of the Cold-Weather Operations Course (CWOC).

He said holding an all-Air Force version of CWOC at Fort McCoy in 2023 made sense. The 16-day course his team of instructors is teaching is reflective of the former Fort McCoy CWOC course that ended in the spring 2022.

"We actually had to turn away people for this session because there was so much interest," Harvey said. "We're glad to come here and hold this course."

Tech. Sgt. Michael Samsa, one of the instructors supporting the training who's with the 164th Security Forces Squadron at Memphis, said they goal was to teach a wide range of cold-weather skills and tactics during the course.

"We're teaching how to use an ahkio sled, how to use thermal shelters, how to traverse rugged terrain with snowshoes and ski poles and be able to sustain operations in these types of cold-weather environments," Samsa said.

— The newly formed Hiring Process Action Team kicked off in January to tackle arguably the biggest challenges faced by Fort McCoy Garrison today — hiring and recruitment.

One of Fort McCoy's 2023 Decisive Points is to aggressively pursue a 100 percent position fill rate by Sept. 30 — a challenge set by the Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger who will be the champion for this initiative. The Fort McCoy Resource Management Office teamed up with the Directorate of Human Resources, the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, and the Civilian Human Resources Agency to find solutions to fill positions and decrease the time it takes to hire talent.

FEBRUARY

— In early February, construction operations were well underway to build a C-17 load trainer facility at Fort McCoy's Young Air Assault Strip on South Post, said General Engineer Gareth Ferguson with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works.

Contractor Veteran Range Solutions received a contract for \$1,497,609 to build the facility at the air assault strip, Ferguson said.

According to the contract's statement of work, it states to "construct a C-17 load trainer, complete with ramp and simulated cargo area with tie downs, and house it within a 3,500 square-foot pre-manufactured metal building.

"Construction is expected to be complete by April," Ferguson said.

As of Feb. 10, a large amount of the framework of the facility had already been completed and work remained steady as weather conditions allowed for steady progress. According to the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS), having the facility at the airstrip is good for training support operations that already take place there. Many Air Force units utilize the airstrip every year for exercises, touch-and-go landings with C-130 Hercules and C-17 Globe-master III aircraft, and more, every year. A work order to have this facility added to the airstrip was first submitted to DPW by the DPTMS Range Branch in November 2020.

— On Feb. 8, Maj. Gen. Matthew Baker, 88th Readiness Division commanding general and Fort McCoy senior commander, visited with the barracks renovation project manager with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Omaha District, as part of an overall visit to the Fort McCoy barracks renovation project.

Baker got a firsthand look at the ongoing efforts. The barracks are undergoing repairs and renovations after the Operation Allies Welcome mission. More than 200 barracks were being renovated throughout the cantonment area.

— Fort McCoy's prescribed burn team got its earliest start to hold a prescribed burn in recent memory as they held the installation's first prescribed burn of the year Feb. 13 along several miles of railroad grade on South Post.

The post prescribed burn team includes personnel with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services Fire Department; DPW Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch; Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security; and the Colorado State University Center for Environmen-



Forestry Technician Tim Parry oversees a prescribed burn Feb. 13, 2023, along the railroad tracks on South Post at Fort McCoy.

tal Management of Military Lands who work in partnership with the post's DPW team.

Charles Mentzel, installation forester for the DPW Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch, said completing and planning prescribed burns must be a team approach.

"Prescribed burns, generally, are done in the spring and fall seasons because weather conditions are most favorable at those times," Mentzel said.

For the Feb. 13 prescribed burn, weather was sunny with a slight breeze and near 40 degrees. Mentzel said the prescribed burn effort was a success that saves time and effort later on.

"We learned many years ago to burn the south slopes (along the tracks) as soon as they are cleared of snow," Mentzel said. "When everything is surrounded by snow, we cut our man-hours well over half. So, we keep an eye on conditions and burn it when it is ready."

— In January and early February, contractor JMJ Construction of New Lisbon, Wis., were preparing to move four World War II-era barracks buildings from the 1600 block of Fort McCoy's cantonment area to other areas of the installation in late-February and March.

"Two of the barracks will be set in the 1700 block, one in the 1800 block, and one in the 2800 block," said Engineering Technician/Construction Inspector Timothy Peterson with the Fort McCoy DPW Construction Inspection Branch. "They will be set in open lots among the rest of the barracks in the blocks. Eventually they will be brought back on-line and returned to use for units that come here for training."

— Dozens of Soldiers with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade (MFTB) held their Cabin Fever 2023 event in early February. Cabin Fever is a brigade-wide event used to promote physical, mental, and spiritual fitness during the winter months of Wisconsin.

— Fort McCoy held its 2023 Black History Month observance Feb. 16 at McCoy's Community Center with Dr. Quincey Daniels Jr. serving as the featured guest speaker.

Black History Month, also known as National African American History Month, is an annual celebration in February of achievements by black Americans and a time to recognize the positive impact they've had on the history of the United States. The observance was organized by the Fort McCoy Equal Opportunity Office.

Master Sgt. Ana Guzman with the office opened the observance with opening remarks. She was followed by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Amy Noble, garrison chaplain, with the Fort McCoy Religious Support Office who gave the invocation. Guzman then introduced Daniels. Daniels is a former Army officer and veteran of many deployments. He's also an educator and serves as a dissertation chair and organizational program lead in the School of Education at National University. He's a native of San Antonio, Texas, and is a current resident of Mindoro, Wis.

During his presentation, Daniels shared personal experiences about himself and his family, and more. "Well first thank you for having me here," Daniels said. "I really appreciate the time to be back on Fort McCoy since it's been a part of my life since 1991. ... Black history is American history. That's typically what everybody can remember. Black history is American history."

"What does it mean to me? ... We make a difference, and we can do the mission just like everybody else. ... Everybody is better when we work together. That's the key message," Daniels said.

— Several members of the Fort McCoy Garrison team earned top awards during the 2022 Army Installation Management Command Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Communications Awards Competition held in January. Audiovisual Production Specialist Greg Mason with the Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office earned the 2022 Installation Management Command Clark Taylor Civilian Videographer of the Year. Mason also earned two other awards in special categories. He earned first place in Broadcast Category C, Social Media/Multimedia Video, and he also earned a second-place award in Broadcast Category B, Feature Video.

In the community relations portion of the competition, Public Affairs Specialist Kaleen Holliday, then with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office, was recognized in Category L, earning the 2023 Installation Management Command Kathy Canham-Ross Award of Distinction.

In the writing competition, Public Affairs Specialist Scott T. Sturkol, editor of The Real McCoy newspaper, earned the 2022 Installation Management Command Moss-Holland Civilian Writer of the Year. Sturkol also earned a second-place award in photography competition. He earned second place in Category C, Training Documentation Photograph, of a photo of cold-water immersion training. A photo that also happened to be selected by the Army as one of 60 Photos of the Year for 2022.

— Contractor JMJ Construction of New Lisbon, Wis., successfully moved the first two of four World War II-era barracks buildings from the 1600 block to the 1700 block on Feb. 24 and March 2.

In moving the first barracks building, the contractors were doing something never done before on Fort McCoy — they were moving an 81-year-old, 90-foot, two-story barracks building and moving it with a remote-controlled system on wheels down streets and through parking lots and over frozen lots.

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FORT MCCOY'S 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

REVIEW

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Matt Childs with Heritage Movers guided the barracks on its course that took it directly in front of one of the newest four-story barracks buildings recently constructed on post. It was a moment of “old meets new” on this historical day.

To move the barracks building from its original location to its new location in the 1700 block, it only took the contractors a few hours to complete. On March 2, with the practice of having moved the first barracks building on Feb. 24 the previous week, Childs and his team of fellow contractors went to work moving another building. And again, within hours, they had the second barracks rolled into place next to the first one in the 1700 block of the cantonment area.

— **Fort McCoy began its support for the 81st Army Emergency Relief (AER) Campaign on Feb. 28 with a campaign kickoff breakfast** at McCoy's Community Center on post.

The AER campaign runs annually from March 1 to May 15, according to the AER webpage, www.armyemergencyrelief.org. AER helps provide emergency financial funds for food, rent, funeral expenses, emergency medical expenses, and other needs. Contributions to AER help active-duty Soldiers (single and married) and their families, retirees and their family members, and surviving spouses or orphans of Soldiers who died while on active duty or after they retired.

The breakfast included dozens of Fort McCoy community members. The breakfast was organized by the Fort McCoy Army Community Service (ACS) Office with the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation. Fort McCoy Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Chad Maynard provided opening remarks at the event.

— **More than 40 teams of Army ROTC cadets under U.S. Army Cadet Command descended on Fort McCoy for competition in the 2023 Northern Warfare Challenge**, which is hosted by University of Wisconsin-La Crosse's Eagle Battalion and 3rd Brigade Army ROTC. The ROTC teams came to the installation from across the Midwest, Arizona, and Vermont, said Lt. Col. Brian R. Knutson with the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.

At Fort McCoy on Feb. 24, teams competed in rifle marksmanship, cold-weather first aid, knot tying, and fire-starting, Knutson said. On Feb. 25, teams then participated in a 16-mile ruck march through the bluffs of La Crosse, Wis., on the Hixon trails with 35-pound rucksacks, beginning at the Forest Hills golf course.

— **Soldiers with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade conducted their Best Observer-Coach/Trainer (OC/T) competition** in late February at Fort McCoy. The competition creates opportunity to provide special recognition to First Army OC/Ts who have demonstrated outstanding military performance, leadership, and achievements in their daily duties.

MARCH

— **Vietnam War veteran and former Fort McCoy Supervisory Public Safety Dispatcher Alan Blencoe's Army uniform was officially placed in a display case** March 6 in his remembrance by his wife Kathy and Fort McCoy Directorate of Emergency Services (DES) Director Mark Reaves at the Fort McCoy History Center.

Blencoe, a former Army sergeant who served in Vietnam and the Army from February 1970 to December 1971, served as the supervisory public safety dispatcher at Fort McCoy from April 2011 to May 2019 when he retired. He died unexpectedly Sept. 14, 2021.

“Kathy reached out to me last fall to inquire about if we would be interested in Al's Vietnam uniform for the History Center display,” said Public Affairs Specialist Kaleen Holliday with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office. “Kathy donated the uniform by mailing it to me, and we coordinated with DES to have a small ceremony to place the uniform in the case. This was meaningful to me, as Al was a mentor to me when I worked at DES, and we shared the connection of being life-long learners. Now Al is a part of our History Center, and he will continue to help others be life-long learners by sharing a piece of his Vietnam experience.”

Before serving at Fort McCoy as a dispatcher, Blencoe served in the same capacity for La Crosse County, Wis. In all, he served in 911 communications for more than 35 years.

— **Throughout February and into early March, progress of construction on the \$11.96 million transient training brigade headquarters project at Fort McCoy** stayed steady despite some extreme cold on some days and snow and freezing rain on others.

According to a March 3 update by Ken Green with the Army Corps of Engineers Program Office at Fort McCoy, the project reached 20 percent completion. And with spring just around the corner, the pace of construction and progress got even stronger. On March 7, contractor L.S. Black Constructors had completed installing framework for the roof and was working on installation of more exterior items. In his March 3 update, Green said ongoing work included more truss installation and more mechanical, electrical, and plumbing installation was also taking place as well. Overall, the contract for the project, totaling \$11,964,432.87, was awarded June 9, 2022. Construction operations began in August 2022.

— **Announced in March, Fort McCoy's total economic impact for fiscal year (FY) 2022 was an estimated \$2.52 billion**, above the \$1.93 billion reported for FY 2021, garrison officials announced.

The data was compiled by Fort McCoy's Plans, Analysis and Integration Office. Workforce payroll, operating costs, and other expenditures totaled \$629.08 million for FY 2022 compared to \$481.6 million for FY 2021. A total of 2,444 personnel worked at Fort McCoy in FY 2022 — 1,320 civilians, 586 military, and 538 contract employees.

Approximately 66.4 percent of the workforce lives within Monroe County. The total FY 2021 workforce payroll for civilian and military personnel was \$185.36 million. FY 2022 operating costs of \$391.46 million included utilities, physical plant maintenance, repair and improvements, new construction projects, purchases of supplies and services, as well as salaries for civilian contract personnel working at Fort McCoy.

Other expenditures accounted for \$52.25 million and covered \$339,994 in payments to local governments (including land permit agreements, school district impact aid, etc.) as well as \$51.91 million in discretionary spending in local communities by service members training and residing at Fort McCoy. Other factors of economic impact for the fiscal year included \$42.5 million in military construction on post.

— **In late March, it was announced that Fort McCoy's Whitetail Ridge Ski Area had its best season for customers ever during the 2022-2023 winter season with 14,465 customers**, officials with the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR) said.

“Fort McCoy's Whitetail Ridge Ski Area closed for the season March 5 after celebrating a record-breaking season,” said DFMWR Director Patric McGuane. “Also on Friday, March 3, at approximately 5:30 p.m., Mr. Joseph Lamb purchased the 13,883rd ticket of the 2022-2023 season at Whitetail Ridge, and he was given his Golden Ticket where he was the lucky winner of a 2023-2024 season pass. Whitetail Ridge went on to eclipse the 14,000 customers mark for the year. . . . thank you to all the Ski Patrol volunteers, DFMWR employees and the Fort McCoy teams who made this season the most successful in Fort McCoy history.”

The previous best year was the 2020-2021 season where 13,882 people went to the ski area, and the third best now was the 2021-2022 season where the ski area had 12,889 customers, said DFMWR Business and Recreation Division Chief Karla M. Rynes.

“Our team did a great job to keep the hill going when Mother Nature did not play nice,” Rynes said. “But Alex (Karis) and the Outdoor Recreation team fought hard and kept it going. I am very proud of the whole team! It was a great season, and I can't wait to see what the camping season brings us.”

— **Also in March, Fort McCoy family member Isabella Hilt was named the 2023 Wisconsin Military Youth of the Year** by Boys & Girls Clubs of America for her leadership, service, academic excellence, and dedication to live a healthy lifestyle.

The Youth of the Year title is a prestigious honor bestowed upon an exemplary young person in recognition of leadership, service, academic excellence and dedication to live a healthy lifestyle. Then in its 76th year, the program honors the nation's most awe-inspiring young people on their path to great futures.

— **Fort McCoy held its 2023 Women's History Month observance March 16 at McCoy's Community Center** with the Department of Defense's theme for the month: “Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories.”

Jodi Vandenberg-Daves, who holds a doctorate degree in history from the University of Minnesota and is the professor and chair for race, gender, and sexuality studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, gave her presentation as part of the observance. Vandenberg-Daves discussed several topics related to her work at the university.



Contractors with JMJ Construction of New Lisbon, Wis., along with support from Heritage Movers of Blue River, Wis., move a World War II-era building in the 1600 block on the cantonment area Feb. 24, 2023, at Fort McCoy.

In her presentation, Vandenberg-Daves spoke about the importance of telling those “stories.”

“I love the reference to all the collectors of those stories and the creators of stories,” Vandenberg-Daves said. “One of the issues, though, and . . . perhaps one of the reasons why we have Women's History Month is that women's stories have tended to more likely be silenced in a culture that is based on a lot of patriarchal norms and traditions. (We) talk about that when I teach this, you know, at the college level. I . . . talk a little bit about the history of the institutions and all these different civilizations throughout the world that have tended to not let women into public spaces. That the public spaces have been more for men . . . whether that's a religious space . . . or a workspace or a political space or a military space, whatever it might be. . . . All those spaces . . . women have tended to have less access.”

— **In March the installation remembered the 20th anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom**. One story highlighted a time capsule left at the installation in 2004.

In November 2004, the 617th Military Police Company of the Kentucky National Guard was one of many military units completing their mobilization at Fort McCoy for deployment. It was in that month the unit wrapped up their training at Wisconsin's only Army installation and prepared to head off to Iraq for a year deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Before they left, however, some members of the unit decided they'd put together a “time capsule” of sorts in a plastic drawer they got from the Fort McCoy Exchange, put some mementos in it, and stash it away in the walls of one of the hundreds of barracks on the installation's cantonment area.

“I think the concept was we believed when we got back, we were gonna be able to open it when we (got back),” said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy F. Nein, battalion sergeant major of the 198th Military Police Battalion of the Kentucky Army National Guard at Louisville. At the time, Nein was a staff sergeant with the 617th.

But after their deployment, members of the unit never went back to find their time capsule. Whoever stashed the drawer of mementos into the wall did it well because it remained undiscovered for 19 years. The time capsule was found in fall 2022 when contractors were beginning major renovations on 200 of the barracks at Fort McCoy.

When workers discovered the capsule, they made sure to give it to members of the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works, who in turn presented it to the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office for eventual presentation into the Fort McCoy History Center.

Nein said he and probably everyone else probably never thought about the capsule until just recently when a member of the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office contacted him to ask if he was part of the team who left their names on items in the capsule. When they came back from their deployment where every member of the unit faced combat engagement on nearly a daily basis, he said the time capsule was the furthest thing from their minds.

“It was a very long year,” he said.

— **Retired Army Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas E. Campbell shared his story March 3 at Fort McCoy** during a presentation at building 60 at the installation. Campbell served as a featured speaker for Fort McCoy's suicide prevention awareness in early March 2023.

Campbell spoke to Fort McCoy personnel on March 2, 3, and 4. His presentation about what he has experienced is probably not too unlike many he had addressed in his audience. Since 2001, many service members like Campbell have experienced many deployments, high operations tempo, and there's also the possibility they've lost someone important in their life along the way — also like Campbell.

Campbell talked about being a sniper in Operation Iraqi Freedom and losing his spotter and friend, Sgt. Ryan Baum. Baum died in combat action in Iraq on May 18, 2007.

“He was killed on a patrol he wasn't supposed to be on,” Campbell said. “He talked me into letting him go on the patrol. . . . He was supposed to go on leave that night. And the reason he was supposed to go on leave was because his first child was going to be born.” Campbell talked about survivor guilt and how it haunted him.

— **After doing well and earning top honors earlier in the year in the 2022 Army Installation Management Command Maj. Gen. Keith L. Ware Communications Awards Competition, several of the same Fort McCoy communicators followed suit after advancing for competition in the 2022 Army Materiel Command David G. Harris Public Affairs Competition**.

First, Audiovisual Production Specialist Greg Mason with the Fort McCoy Multimedia-Visual Information Office earned first place and the title as the 2022 Army Materiel Command Clark Taylor Civilian Videographer of the Year.

Next, in the writing competition, Public Affairs Specialist Scott T. Sturkol, editor of The Real McCoy newspaper, earned first place and the title of 2022 Army Material Command Moss-Holland Civilian Writer of the Year. Sturkol also earned a first-place award in photography competition. He earned first place in Category C, Training Documentation Photograph, of a photo of cold-water immersion training.

In the community relations portion of the competition, Public Affairs Specialist Kaleen Holliday, formerly with the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office and now with the 88th Readiness Division Public Affairs Office, was recognized in Category L, earning third place for the 2023 Army Materiel Command Kathy Canham-Ross Award of Distinction.

— **Army Reserve Soldiers held their individual rifle qualification tables March 18 at Fort McCoy** as part of unit readiness training. The units involved in the qualification training were the 318th Theater Public Affairs Support Element, the 368th Public Affairs Detachment, the 410th Medical Logistics Company, and the 719th Medical Detachment Veterinary Services.

— **Employees supporting the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center (LRC) Food Program Management Office and LRC Supply Subsistence Management Office were part of an Army Food Management Assistance Team (FMAT) Inspection** where upon completion the Fort McCoy team earned a perfect score from the inspection, officials said.

The FMAT inspection took place March 29-31 at Fort McCoy, said Fort McCoy Food Program Manager Andy Pisney.

“The FMAT inspects each installation food program every 18 months in the Continental United States and every 12 months in overseas locations,” Pisney said. “The objectives of the FMAT inspections are to assist in raising the quality of the installation food service program and to increase the effectiveness by identifying programs that are functioning well or that may require improvement.”

Roberta Sheffield and Franklin Booker with the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence at Fort Lee, Va., inspected the Fort McCoy LRC Food Program, Pisney said. They inspected the Food Program Management Office, contract surveillance, communication, administration, subsistence, food safety/sanitation, nutrition, facilities and equipment, resource management, and modernization.

“Out of a total of 57 points available on the inspection, the Fort McCoy LRC Food Program received 57 points, which is a first for us,” Pisney said.

— **The 88th Readiness Division headquartered at Fort McCoy, Wis., and Fort Snelling, Minn., hosted a Meet Your Army Reserve recruiting event at Fort McCoy** on Mar. 30. More than 20 students and teachers from around Wisconsin engaged in training simulation and hands-on experiences.

The students were greeted at the Medical Simulation Training Center by Maj. Gen. Matthew Baker, 88th RD commanding general; Ci-

vilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army for Wisconsin, retired Maj. Gen. Marcia Anderson; and Lt. Col. Jim Lavelle, representing U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy.

The group observed portions of the Army Reserve Medical Command Best Warrior Competition then moved to Regional Training Site-Medical for hands-on medical simulation training.

Next, they transitioned to the Simulations Training Complex, where military equipment and historical/informational displays shared more about Army Reserve opportunities. Lunch was an experience for the group to prepare their own meals, ready-to eat.

Soldiers with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade supported the event, taking rotations from the group in High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle for a ride through the Wheeled Vehicle Driving Course. When returning from the course, students viewed the new Joint Light Tactical Vehicle, the vehicle designated to replace the Humvee. The event concluded with a virtual experience for students in the Warrior Skills Trainer, where they were able to be behind the virtual wheel of a Humvee.

APRIL

— **Contractor JMJ Construction of New Lisbon, Wis., and Heritage Movers of Blue River, Wis., successfully moved the second two of four World War II-era barracks buildings** from the 1600 block to the 1800 block and 2800 on April 4 and April 6, respectively.

Engineering Technician/Construction Inspector Timothy Peterson with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW) Construction Inspection Branch said the building are now all set up in open lots among the rest of the barracks in the blocks where they were placed.

“Eventually they will be brought back on-line and returned to use for units that come here for training,” Peterson said.

In moving the third barracks building, the contractors continued what they did with the first two buildings on Fort McCoy — they were moving an 81-year-old, 90-foot, two-story barracks building with a remote-controlled system on wheels down streets and through parking lots.

The move of the third building actually began on April 3, and it went out of its old area of the 1600 block and into the parking lot of directly in front of one of the newest four-story barracks buildings recently constructed on post. It was, again, a moment of “old meets new.”

After an overnight in the parking lot of the new barracks, on the morning of April 4, Matt Childs with Heritage Movers guided the barracks on its course down the street past the 1700 block to the 1800 block to its new location.

Childs said at the end of moving the third building he thought it “went well” after setting down the remote control from steering the building on wheels for almost three-quarters of the mile at 3 miles per hour.

On April 6, the contractors had the fourth building all prepared to be moved to the 2800 block. However, because this time it was going to be going a couple miles to its new spot, the move was going to be completed with the use of a truck.

In the 8-o'clock hour on the morning of April 6, with power company insulated bucket trucks and utility crews going ahead of them moving power lines, the contractors moved the fourth World War II-era barracks slowly and safely through the cantonment area.

— **Construction of the first new multi-million-dollar transient troop training barracks at Fort McCoy, funded in fiscal year 2020, was completed and turned over to the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW)** on April 1, said Ken Green with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Resident Office at Fort McCoy.

The \$18.8 million project was awarded to L.S. Black Constructors, which is the contractor who built the first barracks building at Fort McCoy, Green said. The contract was awarded Sept. 29, 2020, and the notice to proceed was issued Oct. 28, 2020. The contract duration was scheduled for completion in 780 calendar days. Most of the work of this barracks project was completed by December 2022. Some delay was just waiting for furniture to arrive to turn it over, for example.

In the last update about the project in March, Green said all remaining work that had to be done was completed and the building would be officially signed over to Fort McCoy DPW on April 1.

— **Fort McCoy leaders signed observance proclamations March 30 during the April Awareness Kick-off event** at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy. The proclamations signed during this event included for Sexual Harassment and Assault Prevention and Awareness Month and Alcohol Awareness and Prevention Month. Proclamations also were later signed to observe Autism Awareness Month and Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month as well.

The Fort McCoy Sexual Harassment/Assault Response Prevention (SHARP) team, Family Advocacy Program, Exceptional Family Member Program, and Army Substance Abuse Program coordinated this effort to bring the awareness to the monthly observances, officials said.

— **As April continues, a lot of progress continues with the \$11.96 million transient training brigade headquarters project** at Fort McCoy, including the installation of the roof for the facility.

According to an April 7 update by Ken Green with the Army Corps of Engineers Program Office at Fort McCoy, the project reached 25 percent completion. And with spring now in full swing and warmer weather in place and no snow, the pace of construction and progress has grown by the day.

As of April 11, contractor L.S. Black Constructors was installing more roof covering and was working on installation of more exterior items. In his April 7 update, Green said ongoing work included truss detailing, concrete work, decking had started, interior framing started, and more. Essentially, the building is really starting to take shape.

— **Wisconsin Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk aircrew members with the Madison, Wis.-based 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation Regiment trained to drop water on wildfires April 10 using a Bambi bucket** at Fort McCoy while the Fort McCoy prescribed burn team completed a prescribed burn.

(See REVIEW, Page 3)



Photo by Christopher Hanson

Members of the Fort McCoy food-service team, Fort McCoy Garrison leadership, and Roberta Sheffield and Franklin Booker with the Joint Culinary Center of Excellence at Fort Lee, Va., celebrate on March 31, 2023, at the Fort McCoy.

FORT MCCOY'S 2023 YEAR IN REVIEW

from Page 2

REVIEW

Personnel with the Fort McCoy prescribed burn team helped coordinate with the Black Hawk helicopter and crew to complete water drops on specific areas during a prescribed burn at Training Area B-18 near Badger Drop Zone on South Post.

Fort McCoy Forester Charles Mentzel with the Forestry Office of the DPW's NRB said the training with the Wisconsin National Guard crews went well.

"It went very well," Mentzel said. "Our feedback from them was that it went great, too. There were six drops that were accomplished by them. They told us they got two or three pilots trained. And the prescribed burn accomplished our goal of setting back that area to an oak savannah."

— **In late April, Fort McCoy personnel, in coordination with local and regional fire departments, began the cleanup of a wildland fire on Fort McCoy's north border.**

Fort McCoy Senior Commander Maj. Gen. Matthew Baker said in April that the Army and Fort McCoy value their long-standing relationship with local communities. He said that "our Soldiers and civilian workforce are your family members, friends and neighbors, who live, work and play within your community."

He reiterated the Army's condolences to those who were displaced, lost property or have otherwise been affected by this incident. Fire departments and law enforcement organizations from throughout the state supported the firefighting efforts. Beginning the afternoon of April 12, firefighting resources — people and equipment — began arriving.

By the evening of April 12, more fire teams from across the state supported the effort through mutual aid agreements. In addition to statewide support, Fort McCoy also received Army, Army Reserve, and National Guard resources.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources established a Unified Command in Black River Falls north of Fort McCoy and coordinated firefighting efforts to cut off the fire from the north while Fort McCoy focused on the fire inside Fort McCoy.

— **Four noncommissioned officers and five junior enlisted Soldiers vied for the distinction of "Best NCO" and "Best Junior Soldier" of 2023 Army Reserve Medical Command Best Warrior Competition (AR-MEDCOM BWC) that took place here, Mar. 28 - Apr. 2.**

All nine competitors encountered a gamut of events and assessments that tested their endurance and aptitude. These abovementioned trials consisted of written examinations; a 12-mile ruck march; drill and ceremony; preventive maintenance, checks and services; water survival test; M4 Carbine and M9 Pistol qualification ranges; combat medical evaluations in the Medical Simulation Training Center (MSTC) here; day and night land navigation; the Army Combat Fitness Test; Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) qualification; casualty evacuation training and qualification through the Litter Obstacle Course here; obstacle/confidence courses; and an appearance board.

U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. Daniel Naes, a combat medic with the 7215th Medical Support Unit out of Saint Louis, Missouri, was unveiled as the recipient of the "Best NCO." Army Reserve Spc. Michael Glosemeyer, a health care specialist with the 7228th Medical Support Unit out of West Columbia, Missouri, earned the title of "Best Junior Soldier."

— **Fort McCoy held a special event April 20 in the chapel building 2672 to observe the 2023 Holocaust Days of Remembrance and Holocaust Remembrance Day.**

Rabbi Brian Serle, the rabbi for the Congregation Sons of Abraham of La Crosse, Wis., served as the featured guest speaker and presenter for the event that was organized by the Fort McCoy Equal Opportunity Office.

During the event, Serle sang a Jewish song, "Ani Ma'amin (I Believe)," in Hebrew. The tune, according to the program, was sung by dozens of Jews as they were marched to the gas chambers. Serle also led the effort as a candle lighting ceremony was held during the event.

"Today we remember, and we honor the murdered victims of Hitler's criminal empire," Serle said. "But we also praise the virtues of those who will stand in the way of these murders and explain to the world — never again."

— **An extensive grading project began in April around Fort McCoy's building 2000 on the cantonment area to improve drainage in that area,** said General Engineer Gareth Ferguson with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works.

The project was awarded in an \$850,000 contract to RHI construction, Ferguson said, and Gerke Excavating of Tomah, Wis., is working as a subcontractor on the project.

"This is to improve drainage around building 2000/2001 from the site down to Tarr Creek near the A Street and 10th Street intersection," Ferguson said. "The project is expected to be complete by mid-summer."

The work comes just several years after building 2000 itself was upgraded in 2018-19 with an approximate \$5.1 million renovation. Work on the renovation began in October 2018 and was completed by contractor Platt Construction, also of Tomah.

— **Fort McCoy Garrison, 88th Readiness Division, and other community members gathered April 21 at McCoy's Community Center for an early celebration of the Army Reserve's 115th birthday.**

The Army Reserve's birthday was officially observed on April 23 — harkening back to April 23, 1908. At the Fort McCoy observance of the birthday at McCoy's Community Center, dozens of community members were treated to music, food, a cake-cutting ceremony with Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger and the oldest and youngest Soldier present, and special remarks by Messenger.

— **Fort McCoy community members participated in the Month of the Military Child pajama Run/Walk 3k on April 22 at the South Post Housing Area at Fort McCoy.** The event was among the many events at Fort McCoy to commemorate and celebrate April as the Month of the Military Child. The event was organized by the Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, and all who wore pajamas had chances to win prizes.

— **Anglers had several thousand more reasons to fish at Fort McCoy in 2023 as workers with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Genoa National Fish Hatchery of Genoa, Wis., stocked more than 15,000 rainbow trout in several waterways throughout the post.**

USFWS personnel delivered the trout April 24 and 25, said then-Watershed Management Biologist Steve Rood with the Colorado State University who works in cooperation with the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB). Trout were stocked in Suukjak Sep, Sandy, Stillwell, and Big Sandy lakes

and Sparta and Swamp ponds.

The trout were stocked in time for the new fishing season, which begins May 6, and the average fish size is 10 inches long, hatchery officials said.

Some fish are larger as well as every year hatchery personnel generally throw in some larger fish to give anglers a chance at some bigger fish. According to the NRB, Fort McCoy has an agreement with the USFWS to do the fish stocking every year. The USFWS hatchery raises the fish and certifies the fish health before delivery and stocking on post, Rood said.

— **Fort McCoy held its 2023 Arbor Day celebration April 28 with dozens of community members that included adults and children in attendance who in turn planted more than 500 trees in a plot near building 102 on the cantonment area at the installation.**

During the observance, Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger and other installation personnel and children from the post Child Development Center planted the hundreds of tree seedlings in rows that were pre-dug by Directorate of Public Works (DPW) staff.

"Today we are going to plant some red pine that are going to get really big over the course of time," said Forester Charles Mentzel with the Forestry Office of the DPW Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch. "We're going to eventually fill in this field behind us, but we're just going to do a portion of it today."

Messenger addressed everyone, but he specifically addressed the children in attendance to the event.

"Happy Arbor Day everybody," Messenger said. He asked the children many questions about trees. One child said she liked apple trees. Another said she liked trees because her dad liked them. Another child said they liked trees because they give shade and grow tall. And there was much more.

And at the end, they all said in unison, "I declare today, Arbor Day!"

— **Soldiers from across the Wisconsin Army National Guard gathered at Fort McCoy April 20-23 where they endured wind, sleet, snow, and rain to crown winners of the 2023 Wisconsin Army National Guard Best Warrior Competition.**

The four-day competition tested the Soldiers' physical and mental stamina, as well as their knowledge of military tactics and procedures.

Spc. William Warner, a sniper with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry Regiment, from Seymour, Wis., and Staff Sgt. Michael Petersen, a training noncommissioned officer with Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry Regiment from Arlington, Wis., emerged atop the enlisted and NCO categories respectively.

— **The Dankers family from Hokah, Minn., has been donating Girl Scout cookies to service members training at Fort McCoy since 2009.**

"For the first two years, in 2009 and 2010, I brought the cookies out to the post and gave them to the headquarters, and they gave them to the Soldiers," said Scott Dankers. "From 2011 on, we handed out the cookies at the dining facility."

The Dankers, Scott and Jessica, along with their three daughters, MacKenzie, Nataleigh, and Bella, have handed out hundreds of boxes of free Girl Scout cookies since 2009 to service members training at Fort McCoy. In 2023, the Dankers handed out cookies to service members at the lunch meal on April 29 in Warrior Restaurant (Dining Facility) 1362.

— **Members from Minnesota Task Force 2 participated in a night-time Operational Readiness Exercise in late April with the Wisconsin Regional Emergency All-Climate Training (REACT) Center at the Fort McCoy Combined Arms Collective Training Facility on South Post.**

The objective of the multi-day training event was to simulate a type 3 collapse team deployment response by request of the Minnesota state fire marshal for a large-scale structural collapse scenario. Members were able to use this training partnership to enhance their skills on communications, incident command, mapping, resource requests, and deployment accountability. The REACT Center is based at nearby Volk Field, Wis.

— **Fort McCoy volunteers were recognized at the Garrison Commander's Volunteer Recognition held April 20 at the installation.**

The volunteers, along with the Fort McCoy Army Community Service (ACS) Army Volunteer Corps Coordinator Lorrie Retzlaff, presented Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger with a symbolic \$352,182 check for the hours volunteers donated from January through December 2022.

The check represented the dollar value Fort McCoy volunteers extended the Army's budget as a result of their volunteer efforts. Eighty-two volunteers were recognized for donating 11,759 hours of service. The dollar value of volunteer work was based on an estimated \$29.95 an hour wage at the national level.

MAY

— **The 2023 Fort McCoy fishing season opened May 6, concurrent with the Wisconsin general inland fishing season opener.**

Fishing on installation lakes and flowages was allowed May 6 through March 3, 2024, said Fisheries Biologist John Noble with the Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch. The general inland trout season on post and in Wisconsin was from May 6 to Oct. 15, 2023. Fort McCoy has 10 installation lakes and impoundments and approximately 71.2 miles of cold-water streams and tributaries.

— **Several Fort McCoy Soldiers and civilians and their units supported a special event for youth May 11 at Brookwood Elementary School in Norwalk, Wis.**

The event, entitled "Touch a Truck" allowed youth in grades kindergarten through second grade



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

A scene of the 2023 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House is shown May 20, 2023, on post.

at the school to see up close large military and civilian vehicles and learn what they were all about. Overall, it was part of a Career Day completed between the school and a parent-teacher organization.

Supporting the event were Lt. Col. James Lavelle and Sgt. 1st Class Sean Elwin with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy; Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kevin Gabrielson, Sgt. 1st Class Emmanuel Maldonado, Sgt. 1st Class Carlos Vazquez, Staff Sgt. Bryan Zinsmaster, and Staff Sgt. Alicia Curtis with Regional Training Site (RTS)-Maintenance; and Travis Ford and Anthony Peterson with the Fort McCoy Draw Yard of the 88th Readiness Division.

Lavelle said RTS-Maintenance brought along a Heavy Expanded Mobility Tactical Truck (HEMTT) A4 Recovery Truck or Wrecker. According to the manufacturer's description for the vehicle, it "offers heavy-duty power and extreme performance for the most difficult recovery missions. It has the maneuverability to traverse any type of terrain and the power to recover vehicles weighing in excess of 30 tons, even those mired in mud, sand, water or snow."

— **Assistant Chief of Army Reserve Stephen D. Austin visited Fort McCoy on May 10 as part of an official visit to U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy.**

According to his biography, "Austin was selected for the Senior Executive Service in June 2007. He became the Assistant Chief of Army Reserve (ACAR) on Oct. 4, 2015. He serves as the primary advisor to the Chief of Army Reserve within Headquarters, Department of the Army.

"He represents the Army Reserve in the formulation and synchronization of policy and strategy at the national, departmental, and service levels," the biography states. "He provides oversight to the Chief of Army Reserve's staff and directs the development of policy, resourcing, and plans for generating, sustaining, and integrating Army Reserve force capabilities in support of the nation."

Austin's first stop on his visit was to Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters where he met with Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger, Garrison Deputy Commander Lt. Col. Chad Maynard, and garrison directorate leaders and special staff.

Messenger described to Austin some of the installation's recent successes with inspections and process improvements. Those areas were also briefed by Eric Haschke with Resource Management Office, Jamie Gular with the Directorate of Human Resources, and Fort McCoy Food Program Manager Andy Piskey with the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center. Haschke, Gular, and Piskey all also received a special coin for excellence from Austin.

— **Staff with the Fort McCoy rail operations team at the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center are supporting their first major rail operation of 2023 with the reception of 210 railcars between May 19-26 at the installation.**

Installation Transportation Officer Douglas "Terry" Altman said for this rail movement the number of railcars loaded with equipment was staggered over several days.

"This is a significant rail mission for Fort McCoy that will test our capacity and rail capability," Altman said. "We will have 140 railcars on station for most of this mission. This will require the Transportation Office to utilize a significant amount of track space."

Fort McCoy's rail operations support team is staffed by people operating locomotives to move railcars in place for loading, people working with units and unit Soldiers to get training on how to load railcars, people to assist with moving cargo, and more.

— **Soldiers with units associated with the 181st Multi-Functional Training Brigade of Fort McCoy led a ruck march around Sparta, Wis., on April 28 in observance of Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.**

According to Sgt. 1st Class Shawn Settles with the 181st, who serves as the brigade's sexual assault response coordinator, they donated items to the organization Brighter Tomorrows — a community-based victim advocacy program that serves survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault of Monroe County, Wis.

Dozens of Soldiers participated in the event on the morning of April 28, and they rucked several miles. Soldiers with Fort McCoy Garrison and other units also participated. The event was based out of Memorial Park in Sparta.

— **U.S. Army Soldiers (49 of them) from active, Guard, and Reserve forces journeyed to Fort McCoy compete in the 2023 U.S. Army Reserve Medical Command (AR-MEDCOM) Expert Field Medical Badge competition from April 30 to May 12.**



Photo by Scott T. Sturkol

The construction area for a future transient training brigade headquarters in the 1600 block on the cantonment area is shown May 1, 2023, at Fort McCoy.

Hosted primarily by the Central Medical Area Readiness Support Group (CE-MARSG) out of Fort Sheridan, Ill., this year's competition marks the third consecutive event managed by AR-MEDCOM.

Since its inaugural debut in 1965, the EFMB competition has challenged Soldiers in their technical proficiency and tactical acumen under extreme stress and scrutiny.

"It is a coveted badge that really exemplifies expertise, both in warrior and medical skills," said Army Reserve Capt. Kevin Stoll, a health services materiel officer and commandant of Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Army Reserve Medical Command (AR-MEDCOM) out of Pinellas Park, Fla. "And for me, I want to take this back to my team and unit to make sure that they see that it can be accomplished. If they wish to pursue it, I want to provide them all of the training and resources available that I can give them to make them successful."

— **During the more than two weeks of training at Fort McCoy over the first half of May for the Spartan Warrior IV exercise for units with the 300th Military Police Brigade, hundreds of Soldiers from those units were treated to some meals and camaraderie through "Building Strong and Ready Teams" efforts and community-readiness events.**

That work was completed and led by the Fort McCoy Garrison Religious Support Office personnel and their facilities, and by chaplains with the 530th Military Police Battalion, 327th Military Police Battalion, 384th Military Police Battalion, 391st Military Police Battalion, and 785th Military Police Battalion.

— **Workers with R.J. Jurowski Construction Inc. of Whitehall, Wis., continued their work on the renovation construction project of the Rumpel Fitness Center into May 2023 at Fort McCoy.** The project began Nov. 1, said General Engineer Gareth Ferguson with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works.

"The Rumpel Fitness Center project currently sits at approximately 60 percent complete — just over halfway through the planned period of performance," Ferguson said. "Current work includes interior framing; drywalling; heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and electrical installation; pool deck concrete work; exterior roofing; excavating and pouring additional foundation for exterior brick siding; new entranceway construction; and excavation for new domestic and fire suppression water services."

— **Construction operations are complete to build a C-17 load trainer facility at Fort McCoy's Young Air Assault Strip on South Post, according to the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW).**

Contractor Veteran Range Solutions received a contract for \$1,497,609 to build the facility at the air assault strip, said DPW General Engineer Gareth Ferguson. According to the contract's statement of work, it states to "construct a C-17 load trainer, complete with ramp and simulated cargo area with tie downs, and house it within a 3,500 square-foot pre-manufactured metal building."

As of May 16, the building was completed by the contractor and ready to be turned over to Fort McCoy officials.

— **Former Yogitha Rajkumar with the Kalaanjali Dance Company of the School of Classical Indian Dance of Madison, Wis., performed several dances and described them as well during the 2023 Fort McCoy Asian-American Pacific-Islander Month observance May 18 at McCoy's Community Center.**

Rajkumar and the Kalaanjali Dance Company perform across the U.S. and the world showcasing traditional dances of India. At Fort McCoy, dozens of people from the Fort McCoy community were treated to Rajkumar's talents in dance — all in celebrating the 2023 Asian-American Pacific Islander Month.

— **Fort McCoy's 2023 Armed Forces Day Open House is being considered a great success by installation officials as 3,000-plus people visited the installation to see numerous vehicle and equipment displays, interactive and information displays in tents, and much more.**

The day's activities were centered on the Commemorative Area, which features the History Center; five World War II-era buildings filled with historical equipment and displays, the outdoor Equipment Park, and Veterans Memorial Plaza. Visitors were treated to sunny day and temperatures in the 70s as well.

"We had a great day to hold the event, and we had a steady flow of people throughout the day," said Fort McCoy Public Affairs Officer Tonya Townsell. "Within the Commemorative Area, we had more than displays set up under tents. We also had guided installation bus tours, a sandbag-filling station, personalized ID tags, military equipment displays, marksmanship galleries, and more."

The free event ran from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and people appeared to enjoy everything that was available, Townsell said. The Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office even put together a special four-page history and heritage edition of The Real McCoy newspaper to support the event where more than 2,000 copies were distributed.

Also included in the 2023 event for the first time in several years was the inclusion of an Army band. The Army Reserve's 204th Army Band of Fort Snelling, Minn., played at the event for several hours to the delight of event-goers. An Army band last played at the Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House in 2019.

— **Leaders from Fort McCoy Garrison and the 88th Readiness Division supported 2023 Memorial Day events in communities near Fort McCoy.**

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NEWS

REVIEW

from Page 1

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger spoke as part of the Sparta, Wis., Memorial Day observance on May 29, in Blyton Park in Sparta. Annually, Sparta holds a special ceremony honoring those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our country during this special ceremony on Memorial Day.

The same observance in Sparta has been attended not just by other installation garrison commanders over the years but also the installation's founder, Maj. Gen. Robert Bruce McCoy. During this event, Messenger also met McCoy's grandson, Alan McCoy, he said.

— **Two Chinook helicopters supported training May 24 at Fort McCoy for Soldiers with the 224th Engineer Battalion of the Iowa National Guard**, officials with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) said.

The helicopters supported training for the engineer Soldiers throughout the day while flying over Fort McCoy's cantonment area and training areas. The 224th was completing extended combat training operations at Fort McCoy. The unit regularly completes training at Fort McCoy, DPTMS officials said.

— **Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger held a town hall session with the installation workforce May 25** to provide an update on news and information in the garrison, and more.

This was the first town hall for 2023 for Messenger. Two previously planned sessions for the town hall had to be postponed due to other events and weather. "We're going to talk about a lot of cool things that have been done over the past couple months," Messenger said as he started.

— **U.S. Army Garrison-Fort McCoy was among many garrisons and units named in an official order published Feb. 1** stating that the garrison has earned the Meritorious Unit Commendation for its support for Operation Allies Refuge/Operation Allies Welcome (OAR/OAW).

Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger presented the award and related streamer to the garrison during a special town hall session May 25 at Fort McCoy.

"It was an incredibly difficult time for Fort McCoy, and you all performed outstandingly," Messenger said.

The recognized timeframe for support for the award for Fort McCoy Garrison is Aug. 15, 2021, to April 1, 2022.

"On Aug. 31, 2022, the Secretary of Defense announced that all units involved in the retrograde operation from Afghanistan, Operation Allies Refuge and Operation Allies Welcome will be awarded, based on the president's direction, the Meritorious Unit Commendation or its equivalent," the order states.

The Army awards units the Meritorious Unit Commendation for exceptionally meritorious conduct in performance of outstanding achievement or service during combat or non-combat, requirements show.

— **UH-60 Black Hawks operated by a Wisconsin National Guard crews conducted training May 5 near the Medical Simulation Training Center** at Fort McCoy to support an operation that was part of a medical exercise called Operation Oujja.

The Black Hawks were performing a simulated tail-to-tail transfer with C-130 Hercules aircraft from the Air Force Reserve's 934th Airlift Wing of Minnesota and the 452nd Air Mobility Wing of March Air Reserve Base, Calif., Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs officials said.

— **There was never any doubt that Kevin Herman loved coming to work every day as the director of the Fort McCoy Army Community Service (ACS) Office since 2015.**

"My highlights as an ACS employee were being able to meet so many great people," Herman said. "And my top enjoyment was presenting information on the Thrift Savings Plan along with federal employee retirement options."

Herman officially retired from government service May 18 in a ceremony at McCoy's Community Center at Fort McCoy. He had served 15 years as a government civilian, and prior to that approximately 25 years as a Soldier. That's 40 years of serving in many different areas — all of which he said were worth it.

JUNE

— **At the beginning of April, the \$11.96 million transient training brigade headquarters project at Fort McCoy was at approximately 25 percent complete. Now as of early June, that project is close to 40 percent complete, according to Ken Green with the Army Corps of Engineers Program Office at Fort McCoy.**

Green reported in his June 2 update that the project was at 38 percent complete, and work was on a steady pace, which likely means crossing the 40 percent completion threshold will likely come very soon.

Green stated in his update that current work includes mechanical, electrical, and plumbing installation; interior framing; roof placement; masonry; interior sheet rock; and lightening protection.

Through April and May, weather held well so work could continue mainly on schedule. Green's update also showed work was steady both on the interior and the exterior of the building.

Overall, the contract for the project, totaling \$11,964,432.87, was awarded June 9, 2022, and construction operations began in August 2022. The current contract completion date is set for February 2024.

— **Air Force security forces with the 115th Security Forces Squadron, Truax Field, Madison, Wis., flew into a training area at Fort McCoy on a Wisconsin National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk and then conducted a training field exercise June 2.** The Airmen completed several training scenarios and training requirements during their time at Fort McCoy. Air Force personnel regularly



Photos by Scott T. Sturkol

The Fort McCoy rail operations team with the Fort McCoy Logistics Readiness Center conducts a rail movement operation May 19, 2023, at Fort McCoy.

complete training at Fort McCoy. The 115th is an Air National Guard unit.

— **The Army Reserve's Iowa-based 389th Engineer Company returned to Fort McCoy in June to complete more work on troop projects at the installation.**

In 2022, Soldiers with the 389th completed work on many projects — the biggest being the installation of metal siding on numerous buildings at Tactical Training Base Courage on South Post at Fort McCoy.

In 2023, the company completed several new projects. On the Fort McCoy cantonment area, the 389th Soldiers removed and poured a new section of sidewalk near a walking bridge. At Logistical Support Area Liberty, the company installed a 400-amp breaker along with the supporting electrical lines. And at the Fort McCoy Central Receiving Shipping Point (CRSP) parking lot, company Soldiers worked with Fort McCoy personnel to install new energy efficient light poles throughout the parking lot.

The 389th Company Commander, 1st Lt. Kelly Merritt, said the unit was busy.

"It's a lot of hands-on work that we haven't really been able to experience here before over on McCoy," Merritt said about the 2023 projects.

She said her unit's Soldiers were very motivated complete projects on post and get the hands-on training. "It helps them progress to the next level of training," Merritt said.

— **Hundreds of members of the Fort McCoy community took part in the many events and activities offered at the installation June 14** during the Fort McCoy celebration of the Army's 248th birthday.

The birthday bash, coordinated by the Fort McCoy Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation, began early in the day with the Commander's 5k/2-Mile Run/Walk that began and ended at McCoy's Community Center. The run/walk generally would be held at Rumpel Fitness Center, however this year the center is under a major renovation.

For the run/walk, nearly 200 people took part in all ages, and all those participants received free Army Birthday t-shirts as well. There was even a couple of canine participants. At the end, Varinka Ensinger finished the 5k run first in a time of 21 minutes even.

At the same time as the run/walk, a free breakfast was provided for all the run/walk participants at McCoy's Community Center as well as for other community members who came to watch and participate in the festivities. Breakfast items included, juice, water, bars, donuts, and more.

DFMWR officials said the run/walk was one of the most successful in recent years, and the weather for the event turned out to be exceptional.

Later the same day, beginning at 11 a.m. and also at McCoy's Community Center, the birthday celebration continued with a free lunch, cake-cutting ceremony, and on-site band entertainment from the Army Reserve's 204th Army Band of Fort Snelling, Minn.

The 204th Army Band also played during the 2023 Fort McCoy Armed Forces Day Open House, and they also played during the 2022 Fort McCoy Army birthday celebration. For the 2023 celebration, band members played on the stage at the McCoy's Community Center courtyard.

— **Fort McCoy Garrison Commander Col. Stephen Messenger was among several Fort McCoy people to support the week-long Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Kamp, or STEMKAMP, at Sparta Meadowview Middle School in Sparta Wis., in mid-June.**

The event, according to <https://stemkamp.net>, "is a 5-day summer camp that offers hands-on STEM experiences for third through eighth grade students at military-connected schools."

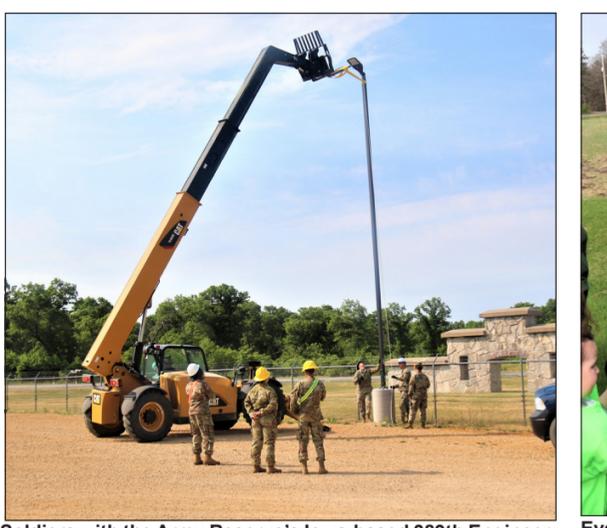
From 2021-2023, the website stated they were offering the camp in 10 locations each summer. Sparta was one of them. Through the five days of the camp, children participated in a wide range of activities at the school. On the last day, June 16, Messenger gave a speech to camp attendees and staff and served as a panelist for a special question and answer session.



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) employees stock rainbow trout April 24, 2023, in Suukjak Sep Lake on North Post at Fort McCoy.



Assistant Chief of Army Reserve Stephen D. Austin visits with Fort McCoy, Wis., leaders on May 10, 2023, at the Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters.



Soldiers with the Army Reserve's Iowa-based 389th Engineer Company work on a troop project installing light poles June 12, 2023, at Fort McCoy.



Event-goers participate in the annual Arbor Day celebration April 28, 2023, next to building 102 on the cantonment area at Fort McCoy.

— **Soldiers with the Rear Detachment of the Army Reserve's 411th Engineer Company of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, were at Fort McCoy in June to support several troop projects** but completed one large road-building project.

The project work for the road 411th Soldiers graded and gravelled in an area of land near the old Gate 20 and Logistical Support Area Liberty and the cantonment area fence, said Troop Projects Coordinator Larry Morrow with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works (DPW).

The overall site plan for that area is to make it into a base operations support site for installation service contractors, such as facility maintenance, roads and grounds, solid waste, custodial, pest management, and more, Morrow said. This road, now fully gravelled and allowing full access to the site, will make work on the ongoing site project go even faster.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Joshua Eaton with the 411th said his small contingent of Soldiers were supporting the 389th Engineer Company at the installation on projects but completed the road project with their engineer Soldiers of which many were new to the unit.

"We're here in conjunction with one of our sister units, the 389th, and we're doing some troop projects," Eaton said. "We were able to get a lot of our newer Soldiers fresh out of advanced individual training some valuable stick time. We've got three pieces of equipment — we've been running a road grader, a loader, and a 10-ton dump truck which has been giving them some valuable experience."

— **Fort McCoy's Directorate of Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR) had their "best year yet" with the 2023 Down and Dirty Trail Run at Whitetail Ridge Ski Area.**

"We ended up with 227 runners," said DFMWR Recreational Special Alex Karis. "That includes 101 walk-ins on the day of the event. This was our best year yet."

All of the participants arrived to decent weather and a course that was ready for them. Karis said there were 15 different obstacle areas.

— **Thousands of troops trained at Fort McCoy in June during the 87th Training Division's Warrior Exercise (WAREX) 87-23-01.** The exercise took place at Fort McCoy from June 8-22, 2023.

According to their mission statement, the 87th Training Division designs, develops, and executes "live, virtual, and constructive training exercises and conducts mission command and staff training as directed, in support of the 84th Training Command, Army Reserve Headquarters, and combatant commands in a Total Army, joint, interagency, intergovernmental, multinational environment to enhance U.S. Army readiness and lethality."

Fort McCoy Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security (DPTMS) officials said troops were completing training operations for the exercise in training areas on both North Post and South Post at the installation.

— **For yet another year, the Monroe County (Wis.) Invasive Species Working Group held their annual 2023 Field Day on June 15 at Pine View Campground at Fort McCoy.**

More than four dozen people participated in the event that included numerous briefings about invasive species and how to control them, and updates from landowners currently fighting invasive species on their lands, and more.

Event coordinators included personnel with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB), the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR), and others. The group is a cooperative effort led by Monroe County Land Conservation, WDNR Forestry, Fort McCoy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other agencies.

— **Watershed Management Biologists Steve Rood and Derek Maki with Colorado State University who work in partnership with Fort McCoy's Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch (NRB) decided to dive into their work, literally, on June 15 to lessen the impact of invasive plant species in Fort McCoy lakes.**

The two biologists, who are typically conducting fish surveys and other habitat work, did something different. They donned diving gear and went on the hunt in West Sandy Lake on Fort McCoy's South Post to look for invasive plants in the lake.

"We were scuba diving to remove the aquatic invasive plants — Eurasian watermilfoil and curly-leaf pondweed," Rood said. "We have been managing these species in West Sandy Lake since 2011 and have been successfully able to keep the population under control with relatively minimal effort."

— **In June 2023, the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office received a letter from Steven Knight of Clever, Mo., who mailed two World War II-era post cards he found to the installation.**

The post cards, which are from 1944, include a post card showing the Fort McCoy Garrison Headquarters building, which in 1944 was the division headquarters. And in the second post card, it shows a set of three buildings that were the military police headquarters in 1944.

Each card was created by Moen Photo Service in La Crosse, Wis., in the 1940s.

Knight noted in a card sent with the post cards, "While shopping in a flea market in Springfield, Mo., I was looking at old vintage post cards, and I hate to see anything of the past lost. I thought you folks might like to have them."

— **Fort McCoy Fisheries Biologist John Noble with the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch officially retired from government civil service on June 29 with 32 years on the job.**

When he started at Fort McCoy in 1991, Noble took a fledgling fisheries program and over three decades turned it into something that has made Fort McCoy one of best-managed fishery programs in the U.S. Army and the Department of Defense.

Through the support of others, Noble said Fort McCoy's natural resources program is one of the best anywhere and it's because of the people he has worked with in the past and now. During his time, Noble has helped the Fort McCoy Directorate of Public Works Environmental Division Natural Resources Branch earn awards from Installation Management Command, Secretary of the Army, the Department of Defense, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and more.

"I started here on Nov. 4, 1991," Noble said.

"Before here I worked for three years at the National Fisheries Research Center in Gainesville, Fla. ... Back in the day, we were a small operation. We had rotary phones — anybody remember rotary phones? And we had one computer. Things have changed quite a bit since then."

Fort McCoy's motto is to be the "Total Force Training Center." Located in the heart of the upper Midwest, Fort McCoy is the only U.S. Army installation in Wisconsin.

The installation has provided support and facilities for the field and classroom training of more than 100,000 military personnel from all services nearly every year since 1984.

Learn more about Fort McCoy online at <https://home.army.mil/mccooy>, on Facebook by searching "ftmccooy," and on Twitter by searching "usagmccooy."

Also try downloading the Digital Garrison app to your smartphone and set "Fort McCoy" or another installation as your preferred base. Fort McCoy is also part of Army's Installation Management Command where "We Are The Army's Home."

(Article prepared by the Fort McCoy Public Affairs Office.)